

Solo exhibition by Marlene Steyn

A new sense of self

BL PREMIUM

26 October 2017 - 07:12 Prakash Naidoo



In 1972 Samuel Beckett wrote a short dramatic monologue, titled *Not I*, in which a disembodied mouth utters jumbled sentences at a ferocious pace. This is clearly the inspiration behind a new exhibition of paintings and ceramic sculptures by SA artist Marlene Steyn.

Knot I : I Knot is a collection of dismembered ceramic body parts in pastel colours — fragments and distortions of the human form depicting the separation of self.

Interestingly, the title also alludes to Jacques Lacan's Borromean knot, in which three rings are linked in such a way that if any one of them is severed, all three become separated.

The figures in Steyn's exhibition reference this bond, which constantly threatens to come undone, by linking the Lacanian knot to a physical yoga pose, in which the body is knotted in order to unknot the mind.

Steyn's elongated, distorted figures bend and twist in yoga-like positions. In some sculptures, severed heads and spherical breasts become the supports for volleyball nets and even volleyballs themselves. It is an intriguing exhibition.

- *Knot I: I Knot Smac Gallery, Rosebank, Johannesburg, until November 11*